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New Notes on the Mossi and the Gourounsi
/Nouvelles Notes sur le Mossi et le Gourounsi/

by

L. Tauxier

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/title page/

FIRST BOOK

Chapter 1

The Origins of the Mossi

174 Most of the people who have dealt with the history of the Mossi have said that they come from the southeast, from the region of Gambakha or Gambaga (Dagomba). From there they are said to have occupied successively, going toward the north, the regions of Fada-N'Gourma, Ouagadougou, and Ouahigouya.

But before that where did they come from?

Captain Lambert, who commanded the circle of Ouagadougou in 1906-07, has tried to find an answer to this question in his study of the Mossi country, published in the Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de l'Afrique Occidentale française /Bulletin of the Geographic Society of French West Africa/, 1908.

174 171 "South of Bornu," he writes (op. cit. No. 7, page 166), "in the German Cameroons, people still exist who are known as Mossah and who, according to local tradition, were once master of the whole country. At present they are confined to a rather restricted area (the valley of Logone-Cameroons).

"The Mossah today bear such a striking physical resemblance to the Mossi that one could not have lived among them without recognizing the similarities; the tattooing is identical except for the circumflex accent which has been more recently acquired, as we shall demonstrate. The physical resemblance is almost total, and, besides, the Mossah have the same social organization as the Mossi, with all its characteristic hierarchy. In brief, /2/ there is no doubt as to the common origin of the two groups, and we can be certain that the presence of the Mossah in one part of Bornu and their traditional supremacy in the country in bygone days establish with certainty the habitat where the people we are dealing with must have been formed and developed. All this, of course, occurred during a period long before the events that allowed the Arab chroniclers to reveal their existence to us." (1)

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1. Actually, these "Arab chroniclers" is simply Es-Sadi, the author of Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/, who wrote as late as the seventeenth century. As a matter of fact, it was the Portuguese writer, the great historian and geographer, Jean de Barros, author of l'Asia (1552-53), who was the first to reveal the existence of the Mossi in the sixteenth century. Léon, the African, did not know of them, nor did the Arab geographers and historians of the Middle Ages. Let us add that one should verify exactly in the area whether the Mossah resemble the Mossi other than by name. The matter has become relatively easy since the French occupation of the Cameroons.

171 Captain Lambert adds in a note:

174 "A new question arises here: can one consider the Mossi as being autochthonous to Bornu, or should their long stay in that region be considered as a step in the great migratory movement that, in successive phases, has brought them to the heart of the Niger estuary?

"In the present state of our knowledge, it would be unwise to take a firm position. We shall merely show that the feudal system that characterizes the political constitution of the Mossi can be compared to the system prevalent in Abyssinia. The hierarchical set-up seems to be identical in certain respects; leaders are appointed under analogous conditions, and the election of the Negus is accompanied by a period of anarchy which we also find here and which seems to go back to ancient traditions.

174 "It may well be that this goes beyond pure coincidence. While
197 we were in the process of editing a small dictionary of the Mossi language, we took the trouble to find out whether the dialects spoken in Abyssinia were likely to give us some clues on this point. We must admit, however, that the vocabularies of the Galla, Ahmaris /sic/, and Tigré languages that we consulted have not provided us /3/ with convincing arguments. But it is a proven fact today that, from the

viewpoint of ethnographic research, text similarities do not mean very much, and idioms that are not fixed by writing may, within a few centuries, become deformed to the extent of being unrecognizable. While the value of grammatical comparisons is much more important, we have unfortunately had neither the time nor the means to make use of this method. We will, therefore, merely indicate this point of view which, in our opinion, could lead to fruitful observations. On the other hand, missionaries have claimed that the Mossi traditionally would have preserved the symbolic notion of the Christian cross, a fact we have been unable to verify and which, without being impossible a priori, seems unlikely."

After this parenthesis about the distant origins of the Mossi, Captain Lambert continues:

"It is indeed highly probable, and here again, lacking written documents, we have only oral traditions to base our opinions on, that the Mossi people, split up by the impact of a Moslem invasion from the east, must have, through successive waves and losing ground in the opposite direction, spread further toward the west, so that the Mossi-bé (1), who still form several agglomerations in the western

1. Mossi-bé is simply the plural of the word Mossi in Peuhle /Peul/ language.

part of Sokoto and even in the Dounzou circle and who also show striking analogies with the Mossi proper, can also be used as a reference. (Captain Lambert adds in a note: "Among the Mossi-bé we find the circumflex accent which would complete the ethnic tatooing of the Mossi as it is today. This mark rightly belongs to the natives of the left bank of the Niger river up to the angle formed by the Dollol-Maouri.") These agglomerations indicate, in a very approximate fashion, the location of the Mossi empire at the historical period that evidently marks its apogee of power; toward 1350, as we saw /4/ in the Tarikh, Timbuktu was conquered by the sultan of Mossi."

The incident to which Captain Lambert refers here is the conquest of Timbuktu by the Mossi (in 1333 exactly, according to the most advanced calculations) (1), which is mentioned by Es-Sadi in

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1. See the book by Lieutenant Marc, Le Pays Mossi /The Land of the Mossi/, pp. 136-138. The author sets the date of the fall of Timbuktu to the Mossi at 1333 or 1334. Delafosse, in his book Haut-Sénegal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, took the date of 1333. Binger (op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 481, 482) gives the date of 1329 according to the Tarikh, but assumes it to be wrong and that it was in 1326 that the Mossi, who he says were then part of the kingdom of Mali, captured Timbuktu for the sake of and by the order of the Mali kings. We know now that this assumption is false, that the Mossi were never under the domination of Mali, and that they sacked Timbuktu on their own behalf in 1333. Besides, the Malinké recaptured Timbuktu fairly soon thereafter and held it until 1433, at which time the leader Targui Akil took possession. The Mossi expedition against Timbuktu was, everything considered, nothing more than a raid, perfectly executed, but without any follow-up.

the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/; but one cannot conclude, as Captain Lambert does, that in the fourteenth century the Mossi were still living on the east bank of the Niger River, in what today is Djerma, and that they had not yet reached, at that time, the Mossi of today, nor even the Dagomba, and that it was from Djerma that they conducted their triumphant raid on Timbuktu. If the Mossi really did come from Bornu and ended up in Dagomba, and, as is only natural, spread on to Haoussa and Djerma (2), they did so in the very

2. As a matter of fact, one can explain the Mossi colonies of Sokoto as having come from the regions of Ouagadougou, Yatenga, or Fada N'Gourma at a relatively recent date, the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth centuries.

114 distant past, since we must place Rawa, the first conqueror of
174 Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya (see further on), in the twelfth century A. D., and his parents came from Dagomba where it is clear the Mossi have lived for some time. The crossing of Haoussa and Djerma by the forefathers of the Dagomba Mossi takes us back to a period that obviously cannot be precisely established, but which is definitely earlier than the fourteenth century (when the Mossi conquered Timbuktu), and one must recognize, contrary to Captain Lambert's opinion, that the Mossi who took Timbuktu came from the south (probably from Ouahigouya) and not from the east (the Say region). We would like to point out /5/ also that they were a great deal closer to Timbuktu in Ouahigouya than in Say. Once this point has been cleared up and the ensuing mistakes corrected, the plausibility of the discovery of the road followed by the Mossi who came from Bornu (if they came from there), which was re-traced by Captain Lambert, is acceptable.

These observations also apply to the continuation of Captain Lambert's report. He says that the wars waged by the second Songhaï empire against the Mossi (sixteenth century) forced the latter to leave the Djerma country to go southwest toward Dagomba. Obviously, all of this is quite inaccurate, but, without accepting Captain Lambert's cause for the emigration and his establishing it further in the past, we can accept the route he traces.

174 "This movement," says Captain Lambert, speaking of the march from Djerma to Dagomba, "took place in a southerly direction, and the Mossi, after having followed the Niger River, crossed it at a point located between Say and Ilo, but much closer to Ilo.

[301] [302] "North of Ilo, the custom of shaving the heads of the chieftains' wives still persists. These women also wear metal leggings (1), par-

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1. Captain Lambert undoubtedly is referring to the beautiful copper leggings, about 20 centimeters high, worn by the rich Mossi women.

ticularly characteristic of the Mossi peoples and sometimes encountered among peoples who have been in contact with them.

"From this point, the migration, leaving the Bariba country on the left (2), went in a straight line through Gourma and the Pama region

174 2. One may wonder whether the Bariba were not part of this Mossi or pre-Mossi migration, since the Bariba have certain points of resemblance, from a sociological viewpoint, with the Mossi: like the Mossi, they are warrior-horsemen, pillagers, and courageous. On the other hand, Delafosse (Vocabulaires comparatifs /Comparative Vocabularies/) wonders, on page 224, if one should not connect the Bariba to the Mossi-Gourounsi, from a linguistic viewpoint.

173 Also, Captain Lambert says in a note on page 170: "The leader of Djougou (Dahomey) is of Mossi origin. Tradition claims that the inhabitants of this village, divided by internal strife brought about by the rivalry of several pretenders to power, offered the leadership to a weaver who had been living for a long time in Djougou where he most certainly kept out of local squabbles; the latter refused the offer. But the people of Djougou refused to give up and made him a prisoner in his hut. Having to choose between the disadvantages of power and his own captivity, the weaver could not but make a decision; at the end of the sixth day, he consented to take command. His descendants have succeeded him since that time without interruption, and, in memory of the incident described, a custom was set up which requires that the new leader remain enclosed in his hut for the six days following his election."

174 as far as Gambakha, the present-day capital of the northern territories /6/ of the English colony of the Gold Coast. This is where the leader who had organized the exodus chose his residence. We have no positive information about him as a person, but it is certain that the establishment of the Mampoussi and Dagomba kingdom can be traced to him or his immediate successors."

174 [114] Captain Lambert adds in a note: "According to Colonel M.-P. Northcott, the founder of the Gambakha dynasty was called Tosogo; but the information that he provides about him seems hardly in agreement with the tradition we are relying upon here." (See Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold-Coast, London, 1890).

Captain Lambert continues as follows:

"The creation of the actual Mossi empire came later; it is nevertheless safe to assert that from that period on, some of the new inhabitants of Mampoursi undertook to open a passage toward the north and achieved it in two different ways. One group, after leaving Gambakha, pushed the Boussanga back into the region they occupy today and reached Béloussa country where they spread toward the west and north, occupying a vast stretch of land which is today almost exclusively inhabited by the Mossi. The other group, blazing a path in Nankana country, went north of Tiébélé and pushed the Boussanga back from the opposite side, thus crushing them in a vice, so to speak, and spread out in the country circumscribed by the Red Volta, toward Ouagadougou.

"One has only to glance at a map of the Mossi country to recognize the direction of these two parallel movements which came together north of the present-day Boussangsé, an almost uninhabited region at the time of the great Mossi migration. It was there that the autochthonous Boussanga, who were then occupying the whole Tenkodogo country, were forced to find refuge and have since been just existing, hostile to any fusion with the invader."

173 Captain Lambert then goes on to the legend of the origins of the true Mossi empire:

"A naba of the Gambakha (the Gambakha, as we have seen, were directly descended from the leader who had led the great immigration to the Mampoursi River), having reached the end of his life without an heir, believed this fact to be a fulfillment of destiny. Nothing in this world is permanent, and doubtless his glorious dynasty had to make way for a new line of leaders. He was at least resigned to this, but his lonely old age was what saddened him above all else. He therefore implored the spirits to give him a child, pronouncing the solemn vow that he would dedicate it to virginity, whether it be a boy or girl. As if by a miracle, a girl was born to him at once. He called her Pogotoenga (woman of the tree) (1), considering her, therefore, from

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1. Pogotoenga, or rather Pogotoéga, means "woman of the baobab," and comes from pogo, meaning "woman," and toéga, meaning "baobab" /a species of tree/. One may wonder what relation there is between this name and the fact that Pogotoenga was dedicated to virginity, if one ignores the customs of the Sudanese. A woman dedicated
568 to a baobab (a powerful vegetal divinity) is considered the spouse of the baobab. Therefore, she cannot enter into marriage with a man, which means forced celibacy. It is true that certain Blacks (for instance, the Dialonké of the Faranah circle, French Guinea) consider that a woman married to a spirit owes him only her spirit or spiritual form, and that her material body is free. From this arises the fact that with those Blacks, and some others as well, women-fetishes, women married to spirits or divinities, are actually prostitutes and practice
[786] prostitution. They are, besides, very rare. In short, they are allowed to prostitute themselves but not to marry. It is sacred prostitution, well known to the whole of oriental and Greco-Roman antiquity. Thus, virginity (sacred), on the one hand, and prostitution (sacred), on the other, are rather strangely derived from the same order of ideas.

173 her birth as being a stranger to her sex, and he had her given masculine clothes.

"Pogotoenga developed quickly. At the age of ten, she reached a degree of incomparable beauty, and at about the same period, torn by the ardors of puberty, she succeeded--despite the strict vigilance of the old man, anxious to remain faithful to his oath--in fleeing the paternal household.

Although pursued for a long time, she managed to evade all /8/ attempts at capturing her, until the day when, wandering in what is

173 today the Tenkodogo country, she met, in the midst of the bush, the elephant hunter Rialé, a lonely and violent man who seduced her. She had a son, Widiraogo, and a daughter, Wedaogo, by Rialé. (1)

1. In other legends (see my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, p. 58) Pogotoenga is called Yennenga, or simply Poko (woman). As far as the name Ouidiraogo or Widiraogo is concerned, it means male horse, stallion. I do not know exactly what the name Wedaogo or Ouédaogo means, but it seems to me to be unsuitable for a girl, since it contains the word daogo or raogo which means "male" in Mossi.

"In order that the quality of royal blood inherited by these children not be debased by exogamy, Rialé and Pogotoenga decided to marry them to each other, and from this marriage were born also a boy and a girl, Zunghrama (2) and Yuganemdo. For the same reason,

2. This is the Zoungourana of the Moulins-Carrier and Vadier legends (See my Noir du Yatenga, p. 60).

Zunghrama married his sister (3), and from this union, three sons

3. The unions of brothers and sisters are not indicated in the other variations of the legend.

were born: Oubri, Oubrogo, and Yampango. Oubri was to found the dynasty of Ouagadougou; Oubrogo, that of Tenkodogo; and Yampango, that of Gourma (4). Oubri's offspring were the most glorious and the

4. The Moulins-Carrier and Vadier variations present things somewhat differently. Zoungourana is supposed to have founded the Tenkodogo dynasty himself; his brother, Diaba, is supposed to

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have founded the Fada-N'Gourma dynasty; and Rawa, his eldest brother (in Mossi, "Rawa" means the courageous, the strong), is supposed to have founded the Rawatenga dynasty which has since become the Yatenga. As for the Ouagadougou dynasty, it was indeed Oubri, son of Zoungourana, who is said to have founded it. On this last point, all the traditions are in agreement, the one on which Captain Lambert bases his theories, as well as those of Moulins and Vadier.

[631] most powerful. The relations between the naba of Ouagadougou and those of Tenkodogo and Gourma, their cousins, were always those of a sovereign to his vassal (5).

5. It is unlikely that this situation prevailed from the beginning, since the higher authority should have been that of the Tenkodogo naba. But when the Mossi kingdom of Ouagadougou subsequently became the more powerful, it established its primacy over the neighboring, less powerful kingdoms of Tenkodogo and Fada-N'Gourma.

"Their common ancestor, Zunghrama, died in Komtoéga, where his grave is still shown."

174 In conclusion, Captain Lambert states:

1. That the Mossi come from south of Bornu, an area still inhabited by a people, the Mossah, who greatly resemble them. /9/

2. That the Mossi went through Haoussa and Djerma in order to come to Dagomba.

3. That the Mossi of today come from those of Dagomba.

He also states, but we can ignore this claim as being absolutely contrary to the facts known to us today, that the journey from Djerma to Dagomba was made during or after the sixteenth century A. D. and was occasioned by the crusades that the second Songhaï empire

174 led against the Mossi. In fact, the Mossi had left Dagomba long before the fourteenth century and occupied their present sites, including Yatenga.

173 Dr. Ruelle as well admits that the Mossi came from the east before settling in Dagomba. "The same tradition," he says (1), "has

1. L'Anthropologie /Anthropology/, Vol. XV (1904), p. 675. The tradition mentioned refers to the tradition of the old people.

it that warriors who came from the east defeated at Gambakha the Dagomba tribe who was them master of the land, and they set up their own leader. His daughter, Ouiaraouga, fell in love with an elephant hunter with whom she ran away, and, as her father tried to apprehend her, she took refuge in Tenkodogo. There she married the local chief, a Boussanga called Zangoumana, whose grave in Komterga is still a place of pilgrimage for the Mossi. Their son, Bougoum, after several expeditions in that region, conquered Koupéla. He, in turn, had three sons: Houbri, Nabakéré, and Kouda, all of whom made further conquests. The first pushed on as far as Yako, made Ouagadougou his capital, and forced his two brothers to recognize him as suzerain." (2).

2. I quote this version which is somewhat different from the others and which also has some mistakes since the name of "Ouiaraouga" (Ouidiraogo, "stallion, male horse") is given to the young girl whom the other traditions call Poko, Pokotoéga, Yennenga, etc. The name rightfully belongs to her son and not to her. It should be noted that Zoungourana (or Zangoumana) here becomes a Boussanga, the second husband of the ex-maiden, daughter of the king of Dagomba.

174 Lieutenant Marc also believes that the Mossi originated in the east. "Where did the Mossi come from when they arrived in the

174 country of Gambaga?" he asks (op. cit., p. 134). "It is rather difficult to /10/ speak authoritatively on this subject: probably from the central African Sudan, the region of the Chad. All Mossi traditions are unanimous in placing their country of origin very far in the east ..."

Lieutenant Marc had already said on page 130, "Local traditions have it that the Mossi come from very far in the east. Very long ago, they occupied a country located beyond the Niger River, whose capital was called Aliaman. This country is presently inhabited by the Songhaï. Then the Mossi came to live in Dagomba, defeated its inhabitants, and the leader of the Mossi settled in Gambaga." (1)

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1. There follows the legend of the daughter of the king of Gambakha. She is wrongly called Ouidiraogo, "stallion," as in Dr. Ruelle's version. Lieutenant Marc goes on to make another mistake by saying that Ouidiraogo means "hoof" (instead of male horse). Zoungourana (whom Lieutenant Marc calls Zoungourouma or Zougourouma) is presented here, as he was by Dr. Ruelle, as the second husband of the daughter of the king of Gambakha and as a Boussansé king. In Lieutenant Marc's version, he "waged war against his father-in-law and conquered the whole country from Gambaga to Koupéla." Then "Zougourouma had three sons: Séré, Oubri, and Couda. The first became naba of Boussouma; the second, Naba Oubri, conquered the country of Ouagadougou, set up his capital there, and took possession of Yatenga. Naba Oubri is considered by the Mossi as the first of the Moro-naba and founder of the present dynasty. His successors were his brother Couda, and then his son Nigamenda."

174 In this tradition reported by Lieutenant Marc, there is obviously an element of Moslem imaginations; Aliaman probably designates

Yemen. But the indication that this country is presently inhabited by the Songhay /sic/ certainly points to Djerma or Zaberma, slightly east of the Niger River in the Say and Dosso region. By dissociating the Moslem legend (undoubtedly created by some Yarsé Moslem of the Mossi) from the rest of the tale, one still comes back to the temporary and distant occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi.

Delafosse, on the other hand, contrary to Dr. Ruelle, Captain Lambert, and Lieutenant Marc, although, like the others, he has the Mossi come from Dagomba to their present habitat (see Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. I, pp. 305-310), seems disinclined to accept the idea of an eastern origin. He says (page 310, in a note), "Lieutenant Marc seems to want to attribute an eastern origin to the Mossi. To strengthen his hypothesis, he says that the organization of the court of the Morho nâba (emperors of the Mossi) is unique in western Africa, while there are /11/ equivalents in Haoussa, Bornu, etc. I should like to point out that this argument is of little value, precisely because, contrary to Lieutenant Marc's theory, one finds in all ancient states of western Africa (Ghana, Mali, Tekrour, Gao, Dahomey, Benin, etc.) an organization absolutely analogous to that of the Mossi court (see part IV of this work and compare with the reports of Arab geographers and early European travelers)." Of course I agree with Delafosse in not finding Lieutenant Marc's argument very penetrating (1), but Ruelle, Lambert, and

1. Here is the argument as developed by Lieutenant Marc (op. cit., p. 134, 135):

"The feudal organization of the Mossi country, the court of the Moro-Naba, its pages, and its eunuchs, are all unique in western Africa. On the other hand, the black monarchs, as they are known in central Africa, seem to live in a setting that greatly resembles the one in which the Moro-Naba lives. The sultans of Zinder, Bornu, and Wadai have also a court, eunuchs, and pages. The little we know about the organization of their empires seems rather similar to what we have seen among the Mossi. But our

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documentation on this matter is not extensive enough to enable us to attempt a comparative study."

Marc do not base themselves exclusively on this argument. They also use a tradition of the Mossi themselves, and it would doubtless be unwise to reject it without examining it further. An argument that could be cited in favor of a very ancient occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi is Binger's following remark: "The Mossi must have remained in contact with the Touareg /Tuareg/ for a fairly long time (2) ... since they partially adopted their dress and use, as they do, the [crutch-handled / poignée en croix] sabre."

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2. In this quotation, I have omitted the word "after," since Binger assumes that the Mossi, after taking Timbuktu in 1326 by order of the Mali, remained there until 1433, having, therefore, one century of contact with the Touareg. In reality, the Mossi stayed in Timbuktu only a very short time, and this raid could not have given them a prolonged contact with the Touareg, from whom they were separated before the fall of Timbuktu, and again as soon as they left the town, by the entire Songhaï country stretching along the banks of the Niger River. On the contrary, if they had formerly occupied Djerma, before the Djermabé or the Songhaï, one can easily understand this contact with the Touareg as well as the existence of the sword with the short crutch-handle /poignée en croix (Binger wrongly calls this straight sword a saber). In addition, when Binger speaks of the Targui /Tuareg/ dress, adopted in part by the Mossi, he doubtless thinks of the lithâm (or face veil) which was then worn by the Mossi horsemen. At the present time, they are no longer worn, and I have never seen them among the Mossi, where I lived 1908-1909.

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do, the crutch-handled /poignée en croix/ saber."

Actually, we must admit that we know nothing certain about the Mossi outside of Dagomba. This is what I /12/ clearly stated in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (1917) (1). The move into

1. See pp. 57 and 58.

Djerma is conjectural, and the question concerning the Mossah would have to be settled by an inquiry made in the Cameroons. At one time I was tempted to connect the Mossi with the races of the south, the Agni-Achanti /Ashanti/, and it seems certain that close relationships exist (2) between the numerical vocabularies of the Voltaic

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2. See Appendix No. I. In addition, a woman called Aoura-Poko plays as important a part in the Baoulé historic tradition as in the Mossi historic tradition. And, although the word for woman is oba, eba, bla in Achanti, Abron, and Baoulé, the Baoulé heroine is called Poko, like Poko (woman) or Pokotoéga (woman of the baobab) of the Mossi tradition.

group and the Agni-Achanti group. But can one base a linguistic comparison on vocabulary alone? It would also have to be proven, grammatically speaking, that the Voltaic linguistic group is very close to the Agni-Achanti group. (3) And this has not yet been done.

3. Delafosse says that there is no special relation between these two groups from a grammatical viewpoint. In a more general manner, Delafosse would now like to believe, as far as Mossi origins are concerned, that Mossi residence in their present country goes back far before the eleventh century A. D. Apparently only a band of pillagers and happy warriors, a princely dynasty came

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from Gambakha in the eleventh century to found small kingdoms in a country which had already been colonized by the Mossi. However, there is a drawback to this opinion: the existence among the

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Mossi of an autochthonous people (Nioniossé or Foulsé /Fulse/) still extant, who are far from having, always and everywhere, merged with the Mossi. According to my observations made in the area (I spent three years in Yatenga, from 1913 to 1916), there are still more Nioniossé than Mossi in Yatenga, 100, 000 as against 70, 000 (see my Noir du Yatenga, pages 665 and 666). The existence of this earlier people proves that the Mossi colonization is a relatively recent one. Also, the Mossi could not have penetrated and survived in an already inhabited region in any way other than by forming small, conquering military monarchies. I think therefore, that the Mossi came, with their chiefs, from Dagomba, and that they didn't reach the present Mossi country until ... But we are coming back to the chronological question which we will deal with later on.

174 For the moment, then, we are still reduced to dealing with hypotheses insofar as the origins of the Mossi are concerned. We know that the Mossi come from Dagomba and that they probably entered the country as conquerors. But where did they come from then? From the north-east? From the south? From the east? We cannot yet answer with certainty, just as we cannot for so many other historical, philosophical, and scientific questions, alas!

Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est.

/13/ This lack of certainty concerning the origins of the Mossi should not prevent us from treating the anthropological question of the Mossi. On the contrary, for it is quite evident that, while linguistics can give us valuable information about the origins and affinities of the Mossi, anthropology can give us even more valuable and far-reaching information since, as we know, it is obviously easier for a people to change its language than the form of its skull. Let us, therefore, look to anthropology and consult Dr. Ruelle to find out what the Mossi are from a somatic viewpoint.

Dr. Ruelle, in the work cited below (1), has worked with 100

1. L'Anthropologie, Vol. XV (1904), pp. 519-561 and 657-703.

Mossi men (unfortunately, he did not measure women, which is a regrettable shortcoming and can invalidate certain averages, for instance, the ones concerning stature). From the viewpoint of skin color, which he generally finds dark brown (not only for the Mossi but for the other tribes of the IInd military territory which he studied at the same time as the Mossi), he gives for the Mossi the following numbers on Broca's chromatic scale:

70 Mossi out of 100 have no. 42
14 Mossi out of 100 have no. 41
19 Mossi out of 100 have no. 37 (2)

2. Page 522.

For the horizontal cephalic index:

2 Mossi have 65
4 Mossi have 68
4 Mossi have 69
2 Mossi have 70
3 Mossi have 71
13 Mossi have 72
17 Mossi have 73
5 Mossi have 74
15 Mossi have 75
11 Mossi have 76
7 Mossi have 77
8 Mossi have 78
6 Mossi have 79
1 Mossi has 80
2 Mossi have 81 (3)

14| /14/ 3. Page 524. If Dr. Ruelle had taken care to measure Mossi women, it is probable that the cephalic index would have been larger, since we know, for instance, that Lobi women have an average horizontal cephalic index of 75.89, while the men have only 74.36; Birifon women have 77.35, while the men have only 74.58; and finally, Dagari women have 72.32, while the men have only 72.09. This means that the women have a shorter skull than the men, yet it is no broader, that is to say, they have a smaller cerebral capacity. This also undoubtedly means that these women's ancestors probably belonged, more or less, to the pygmy or Negrito race whose unequivocal traces are still found on the Ivory Coast, a racial group with skulls shorter than those of the tall Negroes without being commensurately broader, quite the contrary.

We see, thus, that 12 Mossi out of 100 are ultradolichocephalic or hyperdolichocephalic, 53 are properly called dolichocephalic, 32 subdolichocephalic, and 3 are subbrachycephalic.

The average is 74.65, that is, clearly dolichocephalic. The extremes of the indices are: maximum, 81.76; minimum, 65.62. The spread is 16.14.

14| 17| The peoples who most resemble the Mossi on Dr. Ruelle's table are:

the Ouangarbé or Yarsé	74.95	(average)
the Samo	74.90	"
the Nounouma	74.40	"
the Birifon	74.58	"
the Lobi	74.36	"

14| The nasal index for 100 Mossi is:

1 where the nasal index figures between 80 and 84.9

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2	where the nasal index figures	between	85 and 89.9
9	-	between	90 and 94.9
14	-	between	95 and 99.9
29	-	between	100 and 104.9
17	-	between	105 and 109.9
11	-	between	110 and 114.9
15	-	between	115 and 119.9
2	-	above	120

The average is 104.60. Considered in detail, we find one mesorrhine (up to 85), 23 platyrrhine (from 85 to 100) and 74 hyperplatyrrhine (from 100 to 120) (1).

1. Page 538.

[171] The Mossi is thus decidedly platyrrhine and even hyperplatyrrhine, although less so than the Bambara.

As far as height is concerned, the average of 94 Mossi men is 1.71 /15/ (exactly 1.712). But this average would be quite a bit lowered if Dr. Ruelle could have measured women (1).

[171]

1. Lobi women measure on the average 1.66, while the men measure 1.75; Birifon women measure 1.62, while the men measure 1.75; Dagari women are 1.59, while the men are 1.72 (p. 550).

141 144 In conclusion, Dr. Ruelle's study tells us that the Mossi are dolichocephalic, platyrrhine, and tall. These are characteristics usually attributed to the Black race in general (tall Negroes, not Negritos). These traits do not differentiate the Mossi to any extent from the peoples surrounding them. In order to reach anthropological conclusions about the origin of the Mossi, more far-reaching somatic studies than those now in existence will need to be made on the Mossi themselves and on the hundreds of Negro tribes living in the Sudan, between Abyssinia and the Atlantic and between the Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea.

3:Tauxier--20 G-4, 5 (1908-1923) 1924 FA28 Mossi FA28

Chapter 2

Mossi Chronology

174 Mossi chronology is still a hypothetical construction, at least insofar as the beginnings of Mossi history are concerned. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century, historians are almost in agreement, and for the eighteenth century they have reached complete accord. Delafosse, in his Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/ (1912), has given a complete chronology of the Mossi (the regions of Ouagadougou, Yatenga, and Fada-N'Gourma) (1), while I have traced

1. See Vol. I, pp. 306-312, and Vol. II, pp. 126, 139-140 and 149-150.

one myself in my Noir du Soudan: Pays Mossi et Gourounsi /Blacks of the Sudan: Country of the Mossi and Gourounsi/ (1912), for the naba of Ouagadougou (2). In 1917, I took up this question more

2. See pp. 458-462. In truth, these pages do not give an actual chronological list, but there are various indications from which one can deduce the dates referring to the kings of Ouagadougou which I have given on page 674 of my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, under the title : "Chronologie du Mossi (région de Ouagadougou /Chronology of the Mossi (region of Ouagadougou)/, from my Noir du Soudan /Blacks of the Sudan/, 1912" (Appendix No. V).

thoroughly in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (pp. 667-677). I give here these three different chronologies insofar as they concern Yatenga, that is, the northern kingdom of all the Mossi, which is the one that dealt with the Mali, the Songhaï, and the Bambara throughout the ages— which is the one, therefore, for which we have some points

174 of reference given us by the chroniclers of Timbuktu or by the Portuguese. Once these chronologies have been set down, we shall be able to discuss them again with the help of an important bit of information which is given by the Tarikh-el-Fettach /History of Fettach./

174 Mossi Kings 173	Delafosse's Chronology	Tauxier 1912	Tauxier 1917
Nédéga (Dagomba)	1000	"	1233
Riâlé	"	"	1253
Ouidiraogo	dead in 1050	"	1273 /17/
Rawa	11 century	"	1293
Oubri	1050-1090	1175-1199	1313
Ouemtanango	1130	"	1333
Yadega	1170	"	1353
Yaouloumfao	1200-1225	"	1360
Guéda	"	"	
Tounougoum	"	"	1360-1375
Possinga	"	"	
Nasségué	1320-1340	"	1375-1385
Somna	"	"	
Vanté-Baragouan	1350-1380	"	1385-1395
Bonga	1380-1410	"	1395-1415
Sougounoum	1410-1430	"	1415-1430
Kissoum	1430-1435	"	1430
Zangayella	1435-1460	"	1430-1450
Lanlasse	1460-1475	"	1450-1475
Nassodoba	1475-1500	"	1475-1505
Yamba	1500-1530	"	1505-1535
Niago	1530-1560	"	1535-1565
Parima	1560-1590	"	1565-1595
Koumpaougoum	1590-1620	"	1595-1625
Nabasséré	1620-1660	"	1625-1655
Toussourou	1660-1690	"	1655-1685
Sini	1690-1720	"	1685-1720
Pigo	1720-1739	"	1720-1739
Ouabégo	1739-1754	"	1739-1754
Kango	1754-1787	"	1754-1787
Sagha	1787-1803	"	1787-1803

174 Kaogo	1803-1806	"	1803-1806
173 Tougouri	1806-1822	"	1806-1822
Kom	1822-1825	"	1822-1825
Ragongo	1825-1831	"	1825-1831
Ridimba	1831	"	1831
Diogoré	1831-1834	"	1831-1834
Totébalobo	1834-1850	"	1834-1850
Yemdé	1850-1877	"	1850-1877
Sanoum	1877-1879	"	1877-1879
Noboga	1879-1884	"	1879-1884
Pigo II	1884-1885	"	1884-1885
Baogo	1885-1895	"	1885-1894
Bagaré	1895-1899	"	1894-1899
Liguidi	1899-1902	"	1899-1902
Koboga	since 1902	"	1902-1914

174 [174] First of all, we can note that there is, I think, a slight confusion in the beginning /18/ of Delafosse's chronology. As a matter of fact, he counts (Vol. I, page 306) 40 years per generation, and, on the other hand (Vol. II, page 126), he places Oubri approximately from 1050 to 1090. But Oubri was the son of Zoungourana, himself the son of Ouidiraogo, himself the son of the princess Yennenga, himself the son of Nédéga, the king who ruled in Dagomba. There are, then, four generations from Nédéga to Oubri, which must make 160 years, according to Delafosse's calculations, and, if Oubri is to be placed between 1050 and 1090, that would put his great-great-grandfather Nédéga at about 890, that is, at the end of the ninth century A. D., or at least in 910, that is, at the beginning of the tenth century (1).

1. I have already noted this in my Noir du Yatenga, p. 673 (Appendix No. IV).

In this last case, the approximate dates would be the following:

[173]

Nédéga.....about 910
Yennenga.....about 950
Ouidiraogo.....about 990
Zoungourana.....about 1030
Oubri..... between 1050 and 1090

174 This would definitely place Nédéga, the king of Dagomba, his daughter, Yennenga, and his grandson, Ouidiraogo, in the tenth century, then Zoungourana (with his brothers Rawa and Diaba) and Oubri in the eleventh century.

This said, the fact remains that the Mossi chronology of the tenth to the fourteenth century is not settled, and it would be interesting to find some information that would make possible a true approximation.

As it happens, there is an existing text of the second appendix of the Tarikh-el-Fettach /History of Fettach/ which can throw light on this darkness. In the name of a certain Songhaï king, Baraï, it is said, in fact, that the king of the Mossi waged war against him (2).

2. Tarikh-el-Fettach, Houdas translation, p. 333.

We do not know, however, which Mossi king, since the Tarikh-el-Fettach does not give his name, but before looking into the long list of Mossi kings to find out who this aggressor might have been, one would have to fix, at least approximately, the date of that Baraï.

This then forces us to establish the whole chronology /19/ of the Sonraï /sic/, also a very approximative chronology which varies according to whether we consult the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/ or the Tarikh-el-Fettach.

Let us see first how one could establish, even in a schematic and grossly approximative fashion, the chronology of the Songhaï princes according to the Tarikh-es-Soudan.

This chronicle gives only one date up to the time of Sonni-Ali-Ber: that of Kosoï, who was converted to Islam in the year 400 of the Hegira, that is, in 1009-10 A. D. (1), but it gives the dates of Sonni-

1. Tarikh-es-Soudan, Houdas translation, p. 5.

Ali-Ber and the Askias who succeeded him from 1464-65 to 1591, the period of the Moroccan conquest.

We can first point out that, for the princes for whom we have the exact dates (Sonni-Ali and the Askias), 126 or 127 years are given for ten reigns, which makes each reign approximately 13 years. We can apply this average to all the Songhay princes: thus, since

174 we are counting from Za Alayaman to Issihak II, 58 Songhay princes, this dates the beginning of these princes at about the year 837 A. D.

On the other hand, we must be aware of the fact that we have the approximate date of Ali Kolon's reign (or Ali Kolen, or Ali Golom, or Ali Kilnou), who freed the Songhay from the Mali suzerainty a little after the reign of Kankan-Moussa and during that temporary period of weakness which enabled the Mossi to raid Timbuktu (1333). Delafosse (2) puts the flight of Ali Kolen from the court of the Mali

2. Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. II, p. 73.

king and his victorious defense against the pursuing Mali people in the year 1335. Before him, Binger (3) had dated this flight in the year

3. Du Niger au golfe de Guinée /From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/, Vol. II, p. 368. See also page 371.

1331, during the reign of the weak Magha I, successor of Kankan-Moussa who reigned from 1331 to 1335. We can take 1333 as an average date, and it is conceivable that the fall of Timbuktu to the Mossi, which occurred in that year, helped in the restoration of Songhaï independence.

174 /20/ On the basis of this data, we have:
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1.	Za Alayaman	837-849
2.	Zakoï	849-861
3.	Takoï	861-873
4.	Akoï	873-885
5.	Kou	885-897
6.	Ali Faï	897-909
7.	Biyaï Komaï	909-921
8.	Biyaï	921-933
9.	Karaï	933-945
10.	Yama-Karaouï'a	945-957
11.	Yama	957-969
12.	Yama-Danka-Kibao	969-981

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13.	Koukoraï'	981-993
14.	Kenken	993-1005
15.	Kosoï' (about 1009-1010)	1005-1025
16.	Kosaï'-Dariyâ	1025-1044
17.	Hen-Kon-Ouanko-Dam	1044-1063
18.	Biyaï-Koï'-Kimi	1063-1082
19.	Nintâsanaï'	1082-1101
20.	Biyaï'-Kaï'na-Kimba	1101-1120
21.	Kaï'na-Chinyounbo	1120-1139
22.	Tib	1139-1158
23.	Yama-Dao	1158-1177
24.	Fadazou	1177-1196
25.	Ali-Koro	1196-1215
26.	Bir-Foloko	1215-1235
27.	Yasiboï'	1235-1255
28.	Douro	1255-1275
29.	Zenko-Bâro	1275-1295
30.	Bisi-Bâro	1295-1315
31.	Bada	1325-1332
32.	Ali-Kolon (about 1333)	1333-1340
33.	Selman-Nâri	1340-1347
34.	Ibrahim Kabaï'	1347-1354
35.	Otsmân Kanafa	1354-1362
36.	Bar-Kaï'na-Ankabi	1362-1370
37.	Mousa	1370-1378
38.	Bokar-Zonka	1378-1386
39.	Bokar-Dalla-Boyonbo	1386-1394
40.	Mar Kiraï'	1394-1402
41.	Mohammed Dâo	1402-1410
42.	Mohammed Koukiya	1410-1418
43.	Mohammed Fâr	1418-1426
44.	Karbifô	1426-1434
45.	Mar-Fâï-Kolli-Djimo	1434-1442
46.	Mar Arkena	1442-1449
47.	Mar Arandan	1449-1456
48.	Selimân Dam	1456-1464

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49.	Sonni Ali Ber	1464-1492
50.	Askia El-Hadj Mohammed	1493-1528
51.	Askia Moussa	1528-1531
52.	Askia Mohammed II	1531-1537
53.	Askia Ismaïl	1537-1539
54.	Askia Issihak I	1539-1549
55.	Askia Daoud	1549-1582
56.	Askia Mohammed III	1582-1586
57.	Askia Mohammed Bani	1586-1588
58.	Askia Issihak II	1588-1591

I underlined in this list the name of Bir Foloko (1215-1235), because he is the king of the Tarikh-es-Soudan list who corresponds to the Baraï of the Tarikh-el-Fettach list.

174 Concerning the dates which one can get from the Tarikh-el-Fettach, they consist of three notations:

1) A giant, originally from Yemen, who lived toward the middle of the fourth century of the Hegira (1), that is, counting 350 years

1. Tarikh-el-Fettach, Houdas and Delafosse translation, p. 329.

from the Hegira, around 961 A. D.

2) The date of conversion to Islam of the people of Gao which took place, according to El-Motaouakkel Kâti, between 471 and 475 of the Hegira, that is, between 1079 and 1082 A. D. (2)

2. Ibid., pp. 332-333.

3) And the date of Mâkara-Komsoû, who was contemporary with Kankan-Moussa's pilgrimage to Mecca in the year 720 of the Hegira, or 1321-22 A. D. (3) This Mâkara-Komsoû was the 33rd king of

3. Ibid., p. 335.

Songhay, according to the list given by Mahmoud Kâti.

174 On the basis of these three notations, a chronological list of the Songhay princes can be established in accordance with the Tarikh-el-Fettach, making a note of the fact that 360 years (961 to 1321) are given for 33 princes, which makes an average of approximately 11 years per prince. On the other hand, one is led to think that the date of the conversion to Islam of the people of Gao gives the date of Kotso-Moslem (Kotso the Mussulman) and that, therefore, we can place this prince at about 1079-82, that is, at approximately 1080. /22/ True, the Tarikh says that it was not Kotso-Moslem who converted the people of Gao to Islam and that the widespread general opinion about this matter is false, but Mahmoûd Kâti seems to mumble strangely (may I be forgiven the word) about the subject (1), and one

1. See the note of Houdas-Delafosse, p. 333.

can, despite his authority and following the general opinion he rejects, admit the fact that it was Kotso who Islamized both Gao and the Songhay kingdom. We thus arrive at the year 1080 for his period, which gives his predecessors nine years on the average until the giant from Yemen. Moreover, there and now, we can indicate all our reservations about this far too recent beginning of the Songhay empire. The date one obtains from the Tarikh-es-Soudan (837 A. D.) seems preferable by far to the date of 961, obtained from the Tarikh-el-Fettach.

174 Regardless of how the matter stands concerning this last topic,
173 we have then:

1.	Giant from Yemen	961
2.	Ouaaï'	970
3.	Kaïen	979
4.	Takaï'	988
5.	Mata-Kaï'	997
6.	Mali Biyaï'	1006
7.	Bayaï Kima	1015
8.	Beï'	1024
9.	Kiraï'	1033
10.	Yama Kalaouaï'	1042

174 11.	Yama-Dombo	1051
173 12.	Yama-Diamaa	1060
13.	Diatakoré	1070
14.	Koto-Moslem	1080
15.	Kotso-Dariâ	1093
16.	Hounabououa	1106
17.	Yama-Kitsi	1119
18.	Baraï'	1132
19.	Bibaï-Kaïna	1145
20.	Sémanbao	1158
21.	Fanda Diaoro	1171
22.	Yama-Daa	1184
23.	Arkour-Dioua	1197
24.	Baraï' (war with the Mossi)	1210
25.	Yassi Bo'o	1223 /23/
26.	Baro	1236
27.	Douro	1249
28.	Bitsi-Baro	1262
29.	Ali Golom	1275
30.	Silman Nari	1288
31.	Ibrahim Kabayao	1301
32.	Ousman Guifo	1311
33.	Mâkara Komsôu	1321-1322
34.	Boubakar	1335-1349
35.	Ankada	1349-1363
36.	Kimi-Yankoï'	1363-1377
37.	Baro del Yombo	1377-1390
38.	Madao	1390-1405
39.	Mohammed Koukiya	1405-1420
40.	Mohammed Fari	1420-1435
41.	Balam	1435-1450
42.	Souleïman-Dama	1450-1465
43.	Sonni-Ali-Ber	1465-1492

174 What is noticeable on this list (apart from the fact that this chronology brings the beginnings of the Songhaï' kingdom much too close to our time and that, on this point, the chronology drawn from the Tarikh-es-Soudan is preferable) is that Kotso-Moslem is placed

174 here at about 1080, while the same king (called Kosoï, by Es'Sadi) is placed at about 1010 by the latter. On this point, the date of the Tarikh-el-Fettach seems preferable to us, for, if we think about the events of the eleventh century that might have brought about this conversion to Islam, we think, first of all, of the conquest of Ghana, at about 1076, by the Almoravide. We are, therefore, inclined to prefer the date drawn from the Tarikh-el-Fettach, without our reason being absolutely conclusive. For it is possible that either another cause besides the pressure of the Almoravide brought about the conversion to Islam by the Songhay king of that period, or even that that pressure made itself felt in the region at a period other than the precise time of the capture of Ghana. Yet it seems logical to think that it was this event which led the Songhaï' toward Islam, and, therefore, Kotso-Moslem, or Kosoï' the Mussulman, must be placed at about 1080, rather than at about 1010.

But there is yet a stronger contradiction than the above /24/ between the Tarikh-el-Fettach and the Tarikh-es-Soudan. The Tarikh-es-Soudan states explicitly that Kankan-Moussa was the first of the Mali kings to conquer Songhay. (1) From this the logical result is

1. Houdas translation, pp. 12, 13.

that Ali Kolon and his quest for liberation must be placed after Kankan-Moussa. According to the Tarikh-el-Fettach, Ali Kolon (called Ali Golom) did indeed free the Songhaï' or, more precisely, "abandoned king of the Malli for reasons too long to give here and which do not enter into our plan," the author calmly states. (2) But, after him,

2. Houdas and Delafosse translation, p. 334.

Silman-Nâri reigned, then Ibrahim-Kabayao, then Ousman-Guifo, then Mâkara-Komsoû, and it was in the latter's reign that Kankan-Moussa went into the Songhay country on a pilgrimage to Mecca. (3)

3. Ibid., p. 335.

We must thus acknowledge, according to this account, that Ali Golom or Ali Kolon precedes Kankan-Moussa, that he lived about the year

174 1275, and, if he freed the country from the Mali yoke, he did so under the direct successors of Soundiata, alias Mari-Diata. Then, at the time of Kankan-Moussa, the most famous of the Mali kings after Soundiata, the Songhaï country probably again fell under Mali suzerainty for an undeterminable length of time.

It is difficult to approach the question as to which is right, in that respect, the Tarikh-es-Soudan or the Tarikh-el-Fettach. Besides, for the question we are particularly interested in (the date of Baraï or Bir-Foloko), it is not essential to find a solution to it here. Let us simply point out that the chronology we took from the Tarikh-es-Soudan puts Bir-Foloko between 1215 and 1235, and the chronology of the Tarikh-el-Fettach puts him at about 1210. On the other hand, Binger places "Za-Birou or Bayarou Falaka" as corresponding to the reign of Mansa Wali I (1260-76) (4). Delafosse, in his study, (5) does not give the

4. Binger, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 368, 369.

5. Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. II, p. 65.

actual date for "Beïra-Foloko," but, according to the two outside dates he gives /25/ for the Dia in Gao (1010 to 1335), and considering the place of Beïra-Foloko between his predecessors and successors, he should be placed at about 1275-1300. In conclusion, I think that Baraï belongs to the first half of the thirteenth century and that the first war of the Songhaï and the Mossi took place at that time.

Here are the details given about this war in the Tarikh-el-Fettach (page 333): "Then /came/ the diaoua Baraï, against whom the king of the Mossi waged war. The campaign lasted four months, at the end of which time the king of the Mossi was beaten and his army routed and annihilated." The Mossi seem thus to have been the aggressors, but in the end they appear to have been beaten and pushed back.

The question now is to determine which king of the Mossi undertook this campaign, and, on this point, we must admit that we have no indication. We must naturally eliminate Nédéga, the king of Dagomba, his daughter Yennenga or Pokotoéga, and his grandson

174 Ouidiraogo, but one might hesitate between Rawa and Ouemtanango. If one chose the former, he would then have lived from 1200 to 1250 (which would indicate that my date of 1293 for this naba is too recent, and that Delafosse's date, the beginning of the eleventh century, is too early). If one chose Ouemtanango, the same would still apply: my date of 1333 for this naba would be a century too recent, and Delafosse's date would be some fifty years too early (1). In conclusion,

> 1. Delafosse places Ouemtanango at about 1170. One can deduce this from two passages of his Vol. II, pp. 126 and 139. In the last passage, he speaks of Ouemtanango himself and, in the first, of his father and uncles.

it is impossible for us to say exactly which naba was the first to wage war against the north, but, whether it was Rawa or Ouemtanango, it seems clear that since the beginning of the thirteenth century the Mossi were settled in their present territories, including Yatenga, and, therefore, we must conclude that they came there during the twelfth century. My 1917 Mossi chronology would, therefore, need some revision, since it brings the origins of Mossi history too close to our time. On the other hand, Delafosse's chronology also would seem to need some correction, since it exaggerates in the opposite direction. It would not be the first time that the truth should be found, as often happens, between two extreme opinions. /26/

Chapter 3

Mossi and Bambara

174 114 We know that the Bambara king, N'Golo, and the Mossi king, Kango, waged war against each other toward the end of the eighteenth century. Yatenga traditions preserve in detail the memory, embellished with somewhat burlesque variations, of the events that precipitated this war (see my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, 1917, pp. 88-91), but they say nothing of the war itself. Delafosse, in his

/174 Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/ (1912), starts out by
/114 relating, according to Bambara traditions, the same stories of the causes that brought about the war (1), but he does not say much about

1. Vol. II, pp. 143, 144.

the war itself. After speaking of Kango's cruel extermination of the Bambara auxiliaries whom he had formerly needed and who had been lent to him, Delafosse adds (2): "It took place about 1760: Ngolo

2. Page 144.

Diara, then emperor of Ségou, wanted to avenge his compatriots and waged war against Yatenga, but he was driven back by Kango. Later, following a kind of civil war that broke out in Ségou, the Dioula merchants of the town fled and took refuge in Yatenga. Ngolo asked Kango to send them back to him and, upon his refusal, led for the third time an expedition against the Ouahigouya empire. This expedition had no more success than the preceding one, and Ngolo died during it, followed in death shortly thereafter by his opponent (1787)."

Further on, Delafosse says (3): "Ngolo led two expeditions against /271/

3. Same work, Vol. II, pp. 289, 290 (chapter on the history of the Bambara of Ségou).

the Mossi of Yatenga, whose emperor, Kango, had cruelly put to death some Banmana /Bambara/ warriors, who had been previously put at his disposal by Denkoro or by Ton-Mansa. Driven back after his first expedition (about 1760), Ngolo later returned to Yatenga in order to get back from Kango some Dioula merchants who had fled Ségou following a kind of civil war and whom the Yatenga emperor refused to send home. It would seem that this second expedition was no more successful than the first; in any case, in the course of this campaign, Ngolo contracted a disease from which he died before he could return to his capital (1787)."

All this is very scanty, and we would know little more about it (1) were it not for a very curious passage by Mungo-Park, which no

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1. Monteil, in his recent book, Bambara de Ségou et du Kaarta /Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta/ (1924), says nothing about these wars. He only alludes to them in a short note on page 76.

one has yet pointed out to my knowledge and which tells us of a very important event in this war: the capture of the town of Dienné by Kango, a feat of arms worthy of the ancient Mossi conquerors, Rawa, Ouemtanango, Nassodoba, etc., which assured a conclusive victory of the Mossi naba over the Bambara fama.

1974 I have copied the following passage word for word from Mungo-Park (translation by the Abbé of Voisin, 1800, Vol. II, pp. 45 and 46):

"In the south of Jimbala is the Negro kingdom of Gotto (2) that

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2. Djimbala (which in Mandé means country of the great water, from gui, "water," ba, "great," and la, a suffix indicating the country or region) is the region north of Lake Débo. As for "Gotto," a name that Mungo-Park gives here to all the countries of the southeast and south (Mossi, Kong, Bondoukou, etc.), it is undoubtedly the word "Gottogo," the Sudanese and Mandé name for Bondoukou, which is given in error to everything southeast and south of Djimbala or Guimbala.

is said to be very large. In the past, it was divided into a large number of small states, governed by different chiefs whose continual wars incited neighboring countries to invade the land. One of these chiefs, called Moossie, was politic and shrewd enough to get all the others to declare war on the king of Bambarra /sic/, and to have himself unanimously named generalissimo. /28/ From the shores of Lake Debbie (1), on the upper Niger, Moossie sent a large number of

1. This refers to Lake Débo.

boats filled with provisions toward Yenné; and with his entire army

174 he entered into Bambarra. The inhabitants of Yenné saw him on the opposite shore of the Niger (2) before they had been told of his march.

2. Djenné is not right on the Niger nor on the Bani, but at a certain distance between the two rivers.

His flotilla joined him that same day, and, after having unloaded his provisions, he crossed the river with one part of his army and took Yenné by assault during the night. This exploit so frightened the Bambarra king that he asked for peace. He agreed to pay the victor an annual tribute of a certain number of slaves and to give back to the Gotto inhabitants all that had been taken away from them. (3)

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3. This passage would indicate that the Dyoula of Gottogo (or Bondoukou), having some grievances against the Bambara of the Ségou region (assaulted peddlers, unpaid debts, etc.), went to the king of the Mossi to obtain justice, and that this might have been one of the causes of the war. There doubtless existed reciprocal grievances between Bambara and Mossi or between their natural allies.

Moussee /sic/ returned to Gotto in triumph, and he was proclaimed king. He gave his name to the capital."

As one can see, the important and valuable fact that must be extracted from this thick forest is the capture of Dienné by the king of the northern Mossi, the king of Yatenga (who at that time was Kango), during his struggles with the Bambara, that is, with Ngolo who was his contemporary. Because of his informants, who obviously did not 174 inform him with absolute precision and thus made him commit many 114 small errors or miscalculations, Mungo-Park embellished the true fact with imaginary details. First of all, there is the name of Kango, Moossie, Moussie /sic/, which is the name of the conqueror's country and not his own name. Then, the name of Gotto is given to the Mossi country, undoubtedly because of a confusion, either in the minds of the Blacks who informed Mungo-Park or in the mind of the great

174 traveler himself, between the people of Gotto who were mixed in this
114 affair and the Mossi of Yatenga who made the expedition. Finally, Naba Kango, although he brought great glory /29/ in the eighteenth century to the Mossi dynasty of Yatenga, obviously did not find, at the beginning of his reign, an absolute fragmentation of small countries which he would have gathered under single authority. He doubtless limited himself to restoring a kingdom that had formerly been powerful and centralized, and which he made so again through his personal prestige. In any case, he did not give his name to the Mossi (it is, on the contrary, the Mossi who, in Mungo-Park's description, give him his name), any more than to the capital which he indeed founded and which he called Ouahigouya. All these details are thus false or imaginary, but the principal fact remains and is very interesting. Mungo-Park arrived in Ségou just in time, in 1796, to
[153] record it before the weak memories of the Mossi and Bambara Negroes would have condemned it to hopeless oblivion. /30/

Chapter 4

The Cult of the Sun Among the Mossi

794 Do the Mossi adore the sun? And is their great god Ouendé partly or wholly a sun god?

Binger was the first to state that the Mossi adored the sun. "They are fetishists," he says (1), "but they have a cult of the sun, which

1. Du Niger au golfe de Guinée
/From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/,
Vol. I, p. 492.

still today bears the same name as God; they call it Wouidi."

In turn, Lieutenant Desplagnes, in his Plateau Central Nigérien /Central Nigerian Plateau/ (pp. 275, 276) said in 1907:

"The Hougho-Ouango of Mossi (these priests live in Mossi in the villages of Boujema, Mani, Kondogho, Yolo, Tio) make sacrifices to the sun in order to bind it to the earth, morning and evening, at

794 sunrise and at sunset, during the first week of the winter season, then, later, only every six days, in the morning at sunrise. They go to the [778] altars, formed by three conical stones, to offer sacrifices and libations, always surrounded by all the people, the heads of families, tom-tom players, and family masks (Ouango).

"During the entire year, in a highly decorated niche dug into a [372] wall of their houses, the priests watch the sacred fire with which, at the end of the rainy season, they must light the great purifying brush fires."

Lieutenant Desplagnes adds in a note:

"They make sacrifices at each new moon, and then have seven great feasts each year for the divinity. Finally, during the sun festivals, [237] they use a cow's tail to tie the sun to the earth and assure its fertilizing warmth." /31/

794 In my book Noir du Soudan, Pays Mossi et Gourounsi /Blacks of
171 the Sudan, Country of the Mossi and Gourounsi/ (1912), I reproduced this page of Lieutenant Desplagnes without comment (page 590). In addition, I described the cult of the sun among the Gourounsi, who, like the Mossi, are part of the Voltaic family. Thus, on page 241, I wrote:

"The Kassonfra, like the Nounouma and the Menkiéra, say that they offer no sacrifice either to the moon or to the sun. However, I found an exception in the village of Nitiédougou (canton of Sia). It would seem that here, in the early mornings when the sun rises and begins to leave the horizon, people offer it a chicken or whatever else they wish to offer. Moreover, this sacrifice is only made when the voro (1) says it should be made.

1. Soothsayer.

"My informant claims that this same procedure is followed, not only in Nitiédougou and in the little canton of Sia, but also in all of the Kasouna (Kassonfra and Kassonboura) country. He must be mistaken (2) since my previous informants and my interpreter, who is

2. Today, on the other hand, I tend to think he was right.

Kassonboura, have neither seen nor heard of anything like it."

794 Later, in 1917, in my book Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, since the few attempts that I had made in Yatenga to find this cult of the sun had given no results, I wrote (page 277):

"The sun is called ouindigho or ouindigha in Mossi (tili in Bambara). The word has a certain relationship with Ouendé, and the word Ouendé seems to be part of the construction of the word ouindigho. In any case, the Mossi and the Foulsé of Yatenga make no sacrifices to the sun. I interrogated in vain several important people about the details given by Lieutenant Desplagnes, pages 275 and 276 of his work, Plateau Central Nigérien about a cult of the sun in Mossi. It is true that these details concern the religious society of the Ouango and the villages where the members of this society would be operating: this would apply to villages of the Residency of Kaya (such as, Mané, Boujéma, etc.). One could thus pursue the studies in Kaya. /32/ In any case, the cult of the sun is totally unknown in Yatenga."

In my conclusion, I denied that there was a cult of the sun among the Mossi of Yatenga, while I admitted that one might be able to find this cult in other parts of Mossi country, particularly in the Residency (today, the circle) of Kaya.

794 114 The question was at that point when Father Eugène Mangin published a study on the Mossi in Anthropos ("Les Mossi. Essai sur les us et coutumes du Soudan Occidental" /The Mossi, an Essay on the Usages and Customs of Western Sudan/, Vienna, 1916), a study in which the author, who lived for a long time in Ouagadougou among the central Mossi, brought most of his effort to bear on a study of the religious life of his charges. It may well be that Father Mangin's observations touch upon the question of sun worship in that country in a definitive manner, better than Binger and Desplagnes had done.

794 The Mossi, says Father Mangin, in their sacrifices to Ouendé, offer water for his rising and pour it to the east, and offer water for his setting and pour it to the west. In an argument, the weakest will also say: "God (Ouendé) is my witness that I have done you no harm, God [796] will give it back to you," and he will point to the sun. Thus, Ouendé, the principal god of the Mossi, is indeed a sun god, and indeed the Mossi worship, in him, the sun.

Does this mean that Ouendé cannot also be a god of the sky or of the atmosphere, as I maintained in my Noir du Yatenga? Certainly not, and indeed Father Mangin mentions that Ouendé commands

794 lightning as well, which he can do only if he is the Sky-Atmosphere.
[82] "The natural phenomena," he says, "are sometimes attributed to God. Lightning kills those who have done evil, it kills the animal ill-gotten through fraud or theft, and it is God who sends lightning as a punishment..." Thus, Ouendé, while being the sun, is also the Sky-Atmosphere, and other things too, for he has characteristics that go
[797] beyond the sun divinity and the sky divinity. We must not forget here that the Allah of the Moslems is well known among the Mossi and has his established representatives there (Yarsé of Mandé origin, Peul, etc.), or temporary ones (merchants who have come from the north or south, Soninnké /Soninke/, Songhay, Dyoula). Thus, for a long time, /33/ the Moslem conception of god could and has, in effect, rubbed off on the sun-atmosphere-god of the Mossi. The latter might have waged war on the Songhay sultans who led religious crusades against them, yet it is also true that they were content to bestow upon their most important god the remarkable characteristics that struck them and that they admired in the Moslem god. Thus, Ouendé gradually became more and more a supreme god, although it would seem that in the beginning, he was only a sun god and an atmosphere god, first separated, later fused with a predominance of the sun god element.

To summarize, it has been well established that one finds the cult of the sun among the Mossi, along with many other elements as
[71] we have just shown. I have since found this cult among the Dorhosié (1922) and the Gouro (1923). However, among the Gouro, it is relegated to a few fetishists and does not interest the bulk of the population. Among the Dorhosié, on the contrary, it interests the vast multitude and occasions a solemn sacrifice made in the winter, at the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. Among these people, however, the sun divinity has not become a leading divinity as it has among the Mossi. It is one divinity among several and is rather subordinate to the cult of the Earth-brush and that of the Sky-atmosphere. Moreover, I am persuaded that more far-reaching studies among all the branches of the Voltaic population would uncover, here and there, the cult of the sun, as among the Mossi, the Gourounsi, the Dorhosié, etc.

[pp. 34 ff. not processed]